

THESPIAN IDEATION IN NIGERIAN THEATRE AS IMPEDIMENT TO ECONOMIC SURVIVAL THROUGH DANCE PRACTICE

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Abstract

*The paper sets out to interrogate the fixation with the Attic name, **Thespis**, an actor, as the imperial nomenclature for theatre practice, which has confused, supplanted and claimed to represent all performative art forms of the theatre in Nigeria; thus, becoming a burden to both practice and scholarship of dance as a legitimate art form with potentials for job creation in the nation's modern economy. Specifically, the paper examines the absence of the knowledge of **Terpsichore**, as the muse of dance, with the analysis of the origin of literary drama, its influence on the practice of theatre in Nigeria and the configurations of educational curriculums. To this end, the survey method of research design was adopted to extract information from both undergraduates and graduates of theatre studies to achieve a verifiable result based on a dichotomous format. The result shows that while undergraduates and graduates of theatre studies are quite familiar with Thespis, only a negligible percentage ever heard of Terpsichore and this has impeded dance practice in Nigeria. The paper concludes that Thespian ideation is the burden of a skewed pedagogy, which must be reversed in order for the dance as a distinguishable and isolatable philosophical construct in theatre practice to unleash its potentials for economic survival in an ailing economy.*

Introduction

The philosophy of socialisation in modern Nigeria is everything, but inclusive. This is glaring in the area of theatre arts training and practice; and the metalanguage deployed in describing or connoting theatre practice as expressed in the term, Thespian, as the indicator of a theatre practitioner. The ambiguity of what Thespis or Thespian refers to requires that it be subjected to interrogation for the discomfiture it has generated in theatre arts pedagogy in Nigeria. The fixation created by this ambiguous term has truncated the full realisation of the potentials of theatre arts generally and especially in the area of dance practice in a nation grappling with the idea of re-envisioning her post-independence theatre ideology. In fact, the erroneous belief held among the general public is that everyone who studies theatre arts in the university would end up a dancer. This, of course, is a wrong assumption. The reality is that the actor has in a covet

manner claimed the Nigerian theatre and names every practitioner after him/herself without due regards to differences in genres and presentational formats.

Heterogeneity in the performing arts is common knowledge and cannot be legislated into a monolithic concept due the overemphasis (by error) on one genre or deliberate oversight of skewed history backed by an equally skewed curriculum. The term, Thespian, constitutes an intellectual impersonation of all forms of the performative arts in Nigeria. It does not recognise the presence and place of dance in the curriculum, syllabus and scheme of work in tertiary institutions in Nigeria; and might be seen as the reason why dance is not given the pride of place, as an independent subject in both primary and secondary schools curricula beyond the omnibus rubric of psychomotor activities. The fixation with drama has affected the development and harnessing of skilled labour force into intellectual and economic game-changers to what could by now have become a full blown dance industry contributing to the national economy. Thespian ideation, therefore, is axiomatic of self-inflicted economic recession, which can at this point in the national history, be arrested in the interest of national ethos, knowledge production and economic growth. Thespian ideation is a metaphor for limitations in theatre practice generally.

In the light of the foregoing, this paper posits that colonial and postcolonial educational policies are percolations for the advancement of Western drama curriculum in Nigeria and its vaunted Thespian ideation, as an alienating and osmotic metaphor to reconfigure the perception of the art of the theatre as purely drama; thus, denying and unjustly limiting the knowledge of the dance phenomenon – whose raw materials are in supra abundance in Nigeria – and economic survival through its practice. It is safe then to argue that Thespian ideation poses an existential threat to the survival of dance artistes in theatre practice in Nigeria. The paper interrogates this Thespian fixation and its pedagogy birthed by the origin of literary drama in Nigeria and aims at a purposeful reversal of this costly misperception in theatre practice to contend for economic survival in the performative aspect of dance.

Definition of Terms

Every scholarly work must serve its readers the meanings of significant terms deployed in the work. It is with this understanding that the following definitions are offered. The adjective, Thespian, is defined as, “an actor or actress” (<https://en.oxforddictionaries.com>). Ideation, on the other hand, borders on the psychological. It is the preoccupation with the Thespian concept to turn the dance into a significant *victim* in the Nigerian theatre space. In this paper, ideation is used to mean the belief that all aspects of theatre are subsumed under drama. Nigerian theatre refers to the totality of both the pedagogic and experiential spheres of theatre as a product of the modern Nigerian society; while impediment can be defined as, the “baggage or other things that retard one's progress” (<http://www.dictionary.com>). Furthermore, economic survival means how dance can contribute to livelihood of dance artists within the context of the contemporary economic conditions and realities. Dance practice in the context of this paper may be defined as the vocation or profession in the dance industry. Lastly, educational curriculum is “the set of courses that a school, university, or other

educational institution offers” (<https://www.rand.org>); while Terpsichore is defined in Greek mythology as, “muse of dancing and choral song” (<https://www.merriamwebster.com>).

The Origin of Literary Drama in Nigeria

Most often, literary drama in Nigeria is considered a product of the University College, Ibadan in the late 1950s and also associated with the School of Drama, Ibadan, of the early 1960s. But if by literary drama it is meant written drama, then the contrary is the case. Going by the notion that literary drama is a product of the West, its origin in Nigeria is in the 1880s when “... excerpts from plays, novels and comic sketches” copied from especially London, were already aspects of the concert and theatre practices in colonial Lagos (Ogunbiyi 18). While all this may be described as mere flash in the pan, some sixty years later, James Ene Henshaw’s *This is Our Chance*, produced in 1948 in Dublin (Adedeji 718), and published in 1956, officially inaugurated literary drama in Nigeria.

The University College, Ibadan, it must be noted, initially offered “English Literature, Greek and Western History” under what it termed, Classics. Thus, a foundational knowledge of Thespis, the actor, the man of drama (and not theatre) was established among the students of classics. This was before the arrival in the mid-1950s “... of Martin Banham and Geoffrey Axworthy...” who in 1962, “... with a grant from the Rockefeller Foundation, the School of Drama began, the first of its kind in Africa (<http://arts.ui.edu.ng/historythea>).

With Kenneth Post and Geoffrey Axworthy’s 1959 productions of Wole Soyinka’s *The Swamp Dwellers* and *Lion and the Jewel*; the Ibadan audiences who “...were thrilled to a wide range of plays, from Greek classics, through Shakespeare, Sheridan to old long-forgotten sensations of London Westend (Ogunbiyi 28), and Wole Soyinka’s 1960 production of *A Dance of the Forest*, literary drama had made a foothold on the performative landscape of Nigeria. The attention and interest of the elite, a rising small, but influential middle class armed with Western education, identified with this type of drama which substituted as entertainment and filled the vacuum created by the colonial emancipation of indigenous performative arts by the destabilisation of the cultural institutions that once sustained them. Added to this was the emergence of cosmopolitan centres, new and Western-type jobs in colonial administrative centres. Whether such performances were tragic or comedic, the hero always cut the image of Thespis, the new standard to drive the dramatic plot.

The Ulli Beier-Founded Mbari as Home-grown Strategy against Dance

The strategy upon which literary drama rode to prominence in Nigeria was multifaceted. This included theatre workshops in the English department, Extra-Mural Studies of the Institute of Education of the University College, Ibadan, “The 1960 Masks”, the founding of Mbari Club in 1961 (<http://www.britannica.com>), and the establishment of the School of Drama in 1962. But Mbari Club, founded by Ulli Beier, was the turning point of the new theatre that was to emerge viewed from the quality of intellectual and cultural actors in its membership which included, but not limited to,

...Wole Soyinka, D. O. Fagunwa, J. P. Clark, Christopher Okigbo, Ezekiel Mphahlele, Ulli Beier, Uche Okeke, Demas Nwoko, Segun Olusola, Dapo Adelugba, Michael Crowder, Kola Ogunmola, Ralph Opara, Gerald Moore, Geoffrey Axworthy, Martin Banham, John Ferguson, Joel Adedeji, Peggy Harper, Frank Speed... (Oti 30).

From the foregoing, it can be argued that the rapid development of literary drama in Nigeria was guided by extra-continental and international forces of intellectual and cultural minders both professionally and financially. Upon analysis, “this was an assemblage of Nigeria’s best artistic minds teaming up with South Africans, English and German intellectuals. From this time onward, English literary drama raised the bar ...” (Udoka 60).

The analysis of the origin of literary drama in Nigeria establishes the fact that it was first, a passive engagement and second, the University College, Ibadan, as a State institution, installed and sanctioned an intellectual ideology that cultivated a taste for and altered behaviour in favour of drama. Traditionally, the study of literary drama honours its Greek origins, history and schematisation that legislate that Thespis is the first known actor. The University College drama lectures in the English department and later the School of Drama would not have excluded Thespis in their curriculum, syllabus and scheme of work for any reason.

Among the Ibadan drama provocateurs was a dance scholar, Peggy Harper, a white South African migrant. In spite of her presence and scholarly training as well as excellent grounding in ballet and Graham techniques, there is no record that dance, even by Greek standards, was acknowledged as part of the curriculum of the School of Drama. In fact, Peggy Harper endured the suffocation of the lopsided curriculum by serving as, “... Movement Director” (Adebanjo 276). As it could be imagined, this is more of a production credit than academic and merely to enhance the movement skills in the training of prospective “Thespians”. This, despite the fact that the planners of the curriculum were well aware that as Nigerians, a bi-lingual dance curriculum could have served the purpose of exposure of the students to a foreign dance form and inculcate a sense of love for the canons of indigenous Nigerian dance forms as well. In its place, emphasis was on submersion and denial of the benefits of research to indigenous forms because the chief performer, Thespis, the secular drama hero of colonial culture was already on duty to eclipse any local and ‘inferior’ counterpart.

It is obvious from the foregoing that dance was not a subject matter of English Literature in University College, Ibadan. It is in order, therefore, to conjecture that in the studies of that subject then (still subsisting), dance was mentioned in passing and associated with *maenadic* frenzy alongside dithyrambic ‘incoherence’, which Western literature and philosophy disapproved while adopting the Aristotelian schema for drama. If it had been considered as a needful element of the subjects of English Literature and Greek, Hellenist history would have introduced Terpsichore, as the muse of dance and song and justify the subject as a human and social activity in a university founded in a colony. On the contrary, not even a millisecond had been allocated to it as the fixation of

Western literary drama gave no space for such luxury. As such, the capacity of dance to convey ideas, thoughts, truths, beliefs, formulate ideas and by and by as an economic source of survival had been curtailed and arrested by circumstance by an inhumane, imperialistic, subjugating, Euro-jingoistic and lopsided drama and theatre pedagogy. Naturally and logically, in the absence of a pedagogical framework with even a miniscule consideration of Terpsichore in Hellenist literature and civilisation, the products of University College, Ibadan, down-graded and suppressed norms and values of the dances of their cultures, only to poach and exploit them as artifices to the drama superintended by the iconic character of Thespis.

From the onset, formalised literary drama had publicised its mission and intentions for the future as “Greek gift” to the development of Nigerian drama; not theatre. However, literary drama supplied the texts for the theatre that emerged and along with it, Thespis as the image of the theatre. The Thespian badge of honour from the beginning foreboded the impediment to the economics of dance; but unfortunately, this fad caught on with the vulnerable and aping aspirants to the performing professions and support services providers were at home with the sobriquet. This clearly illustrates that the curriculum for literary drama did not fully comprehend, consider or was responsive to the developmental needs of Nigeria except to produce actors and promote the Western drama order. Consequently, it is safe to hold the view that thespian ideation in Nigeria was birthed by a deliberate intellectual politics sanctioned by the institution for knowledge production through its theoretical postulations of literary drama to the detriment of dance as the casualty. Historically, dance is acknowledged as the precursor to drama and not the other way round.

The Influence of Literary Drama on Dance Practice in Nigeria

The seed that has influenced theatre practice was sown when drama was misconstrued as theatre. In the theatre, drama is known as play. As a play, it is just one of the three performing art forms of the theatre and not all of theatre it claims; the others being dance and music. It is imperative here, to explain the segregation in the performing arts in the West from where Nigeria borrowed its prevalent theatre ideology to date. The concept of theatre is strictly about plays, while ballet (a dance that tells a story) is about dance and opera is all about music. All this share the narrative mode. But the Nigerian experience is that literary drama, even as a play has subsumed the other two art forms and also condescendingly vacated inherited indigenous performing arts capital founded on myths and historical facts and introduced cultural and intellectual relativism thus denying objective truth in favour of political correctness.

It is worth reiterating that, literary drama is not organic to Nigerian cultures or derived from her cultural values – beliefs, taboos, rituals, habits, norms, history, and communication. As a new entrant into a cultural space with existing dominant forms of distinguishable performative arts styles of story drama, mask drama, festival drama, ritual drama not to talk of the genres of dance and music based on shared histories and identities, literary drama could have served its purpose without seeking to replace these non-Western models or exerting undue strain on indigenous performative infrastructure. But in the exercise of its colonial, imperial and magisterial authority, it countered

indigenous modes of cognition and altered behaviour; suppressed and contained the dance and music genres and installed Thespis as the dominant image of the theatre.

From available literature, there is evidence of cautious intention from the early 1960s for literary drama to influence dance practice in Nigeria by insisting that elements and characteristics of Western drama be given prominence in the other two art forms of dance and music. To this end, these two arts forms were tinkered to adjust to the dictates and canons of construction as pioneered and handed down by the Ibadan drama think-tank. It is, therefore, incontrovertible that literary drama's Western writing traditions were introduced to influence the development of dance practice in Nigeria. This guided evolution was stage-managed to precipitate concepts and forms that were hybrids and which continue to distance themselves with dialogue and conflicts from the formats and aesthetics domiciled in indigenous practices. As early as 1969, Akin Euba had noted that,

...there have also been experiments in the development of modern dance-drama,.... These experiments have taken place principally at the School of Drama, University of Ibadan, which has in the last four years produced some two or three full-length dance-dramas, with choreography by Peggy Harper (480).

While the idea here is to illustrate the intrusion into dance in Nigeria, it was actually not a direct experiment by the School of Drama because it had no dance in its curriculum. The experiments were, "...under the auspices of the Students' Dramatic Society..." (Amosu 73), where Peggy Harper produced the dance drama *Owuama*. This implicitly demonstrates two things namely, what the School of Drama stood for and the bias against dance leading to its exclusion and mutual suspicion from mainstream academics.

Meanwhile, there was no Nigerian with cognate training commensurate to Peggy Harper's background in ballet and Graham's modern dance technique, to attempt such experiments in the development of "Nigerian" modern dance-drama nor was there any attempt at research to obtain data for such purpose. That was an opportunity lost. Now, the question is: what were the models informing such experiments in dance? The answer is simple: literary drama. It was to promote the image of the actor personified in Thespis, by the adoption of the canon for literary drama and 'pretend' with dance as a pastime and not as a reality or valued aspect of human behaviour as it obtained within the framework of indigenous praxes. Such improvisations and experiments were not within the parameters of Nigerian traditions either and the hybrid did not guarantee the development of existing forms and styles since their settings were within Western typological frameworks of drama.

Beyond founding the Mbari-Mbayo Club, Ulli Beier serves as a good example of how some of the cultural minders overreached themselves in the attempt to create a theatre of their dreams, in a colonial sense, for Nigeria. The significance of Ulli Beier's experiment above that of Peggy Harper rests on the fact that his experiment was given international prominence of representing what the Nigerian theatre was, albeit, erroneously. This was another effort at extending the sphere of influence of Western

literary drama and an attempt at substituting the popular theatre idiom that had morphed into recognisable theatre events courtesy of indigenous geniuses. According to Demas Nwoko,

Ogunmola and Ogunde vernacular troupes. He suggested a historical theme from the legends, a subject that gave ample opportunity for the exhibition of “traditional African culture”. Through further suggestions during production, original indigenous music and appropriate dances along with (poetry) were used. Added to this for decor were black-cloths of typical modern art school colours which were the results of the art workshops he had organised. The result was an exhibition of slices of African customs and traditional art forms, loosely linked by improvised dramatic movement and speech. *Oba Koso*, as the play was called, was a very exotic presentation and it was sent around Europe as a demonstration of our fine culture (470).

Here, traditional dance is exploited, deconstructed to advance a dramatic plot and not dance with its dialogic integrity. Ulli Beier’s postmodernist mindset concocted a potpourri of a theatre in which the dance served the drama contrary to indigenous performance principles and practice. Such undermining efforts, hidden from the view of ordinary theatre goers, expose the true intent of the minders at the infancy of modern Nigeria’s theatre development. Beier exploited Ladipo’s innocence to his advantage. In Ibadan, Ladipo “...became one of the founding members of an artist society or club called Mbari-Mbayo and became influenced by Beier” (National, N.pag). Ulli Beier’s intent was no more than affirming that Nigerian art is nothing more than exotic mindless behaviour in its primitive state that had to be ‘civilized’ through the literary drama schema mirroring the West, a continuation of the theses of James G. Frazer, Ruth Finnegan, Richard Welleschek, and the content-argument school of Nigerian drama and theatre. But did Ulli Beier’s experiment create a theatre of a truly Yoruba identity even with the enigmatic Duro Ladipo or alienated it? Of course not; but it structured a new format of dance as a function of drama and set a precedence with Duro Ladipo as sentinel for Thespis.

The element of music in the traditional form which indigenous dances most often depend on for corporate communication was not spared the threat of ignominy and extinction in the emerging Nigerian theatre as it was gradually being replaced.

The idea that has been expressed in recent years that the musical cultures of Africa are fast dying out and that efforts must be made to preserve them for posterity. It is true of course that many changes have occurred in African music which have resulted in new musical forms from abroad replacing some of the traditional forms (Euba 476).

If traditional music had to survive at all, it must go through the mill of makeover in order to acquire modern vocal and aural values through the method of hybridisation.

This did not sit well with music enthusiasts. The challenges of the hybridisation in the music genre included incongruity and tilted towards alienation. It was observed that, "...in the main, the reference to traditional culture in these hybrid forms is seldom effective enough to establish an identity with Nigerian culture and these compositions must be classified primarily as belonging to the European musical culture" (Euba 480). Besides such bastardisation and compared to literary drama, there were no equitable opportunities for the dance and music indigenous to Nigerian cultures to develop and thrive as products of the academe while the art of Thespis was beatified.

Talking about playwrights produced by the University College, Ibadan, and elsewhere, they may not be completely liable of the felony of cultural destabilisation for the simple reason that they had four fundamental problems. First, the curriculum had no considerations for local cultural traditions. Second, the personal aspiration to develop oneself within the context of a culturally-biased curriculum without the literary map of the indigenous cultures fundamentally beclouded the notion of the preservation and application of time-tested indigenous forms of creative expressions. Third, the sumptuous influx of cultural and intellectual relativism through colonial curriculum deconstructed and evicted archetypical notions of creative expressions steeped in mystical and social values and encouraged eclecticism. Fourth, the indigenous ideas of the performing arts were pitched against an unknown quantity. However, and with all due respect to the contributions of that generation of literary dramatists, evidences show that they were accomplices to the deconstruction of not only dance, but also music for services in their dramatic works. This jettisoned the mystical, social and artistic value of music and dance in indigenous cultures through conditioning and loss of identity. For example, their actions led to the presentation of traditional music style as a function of drama and denied it the authenticity of an art form.

Nigerian playwrights working in the English language have also been including in their plays

an increasing amount of traditional music. Of great interest in this respect are John Pepper Clark's *The Masquerade* and *Ozidi*, and Wole Soyinka's *Lion and the Jewel* and *Kongi's Harvest*. In devising music for *Kongi's Harvest*, Soyinka went to the real sources of traditional music and has created some very effective moments in his use of music as a function of drama. These then represent the beginnings of a modern tradition of music-drama (479-480).

It is important to take cognisance of Euba's emphasis on playwrights writing in the English language and note that it points us to the Wittgenstienian theory of experiencing another life form by engaging in the language game of a culture. So, the deployment of traditional music and dance in plays by such Nigerian playwrights in their works were, in the opinion of this writer, mere irrelevant nostalgia deodorised and appended on productions to which they generated nothing more than lingual incoherence and the expected native exoticism.

The Configuration of Curriculums in the Primary and Secondary schools Systems

If any educational project is to make sense in society, it must necessarily be a part of the society. It must concern itself with the process of developing the society to bring about civilization. Education can only achieve this if it is responsive to the aspirations and goals of the society which it serves. The evidence of that response is reflected in the set of courses to be offered at all levels of education in the society. This set of courses constitutes the curriculum; a document with the objectives affirming the needs of the society desiring sustainability. Sadly, all such documents in Nigeria in both colonial and postcolonial editions have consistently maintained the negative colonial attitude towards dance.

From the first educational ordinance of 1882 (Fafunwa 36) until 1969, when it was directed that “the schools should start developing and projecting the Nigerian, African culture, arts and language as well the world cultural heritage” (45); and despite the several reviews of the *National Policy on Education*, the curriculum framework for Nigerian primary and secondary schools does not consider dance as a subject area in spite of the obviously changing society. In this regard, what will shape the “... knowledge, skills, attitudes, and behaviours...” (Process of..., 3) are yet to be articulated and considered in the development of curriculum in Nigeria. That dance to this day is still not a scoring subject at both primary and secondary school levels speak volumes about the pedagogical limitations of Nigerian curricula and a continuation of the projection of literary drama and the beatification of Thespis. This is a fixation.

Terpsichore in Tertiary Institutions in Nigeria – A Pilot Study

Since the introduction of literary drama into the Nigerian university system, dance pedagogy has not received attention comparable to drama which has become an important aspect of training in theatre, dramatic, creative or performing arts departments. This pilot study is to monitor the orientation that the emphasis on the Thespian concept has precipitated against dance in theatre practice in Nigeria. It is the case that a student receives instructions in dance at least in one semester in the course of studies in such departments. The objectives of this pilot study are: to determine from the initial data whether a major study in thespian ideation could be developed; to verify if actually Thespian ideation exists among undergraduates and graduates of theatre arts in Nigerian universities.

This pilot study was designed to assess the comprehension of Terpsichore among theatre artistes. A questionnaire was drawn up and given to a Psychometrician for face/expert validation from which the Nigerian Thespian Ideation Scale (NTIS) was developed comprising nineteen items with twelve of them in a dichotomous format. The procedure for administering the questionnaire was by requesting the participants to be part of the pilot study. Participants were recruited through convenient sampling methods in Calabar, Lagos and Abuja in August 2017. A total of 60 copies of questionnaire were distributed to three undergraduates to contact their classmates and lecturers and another 10 copies were administered by the researcher on theatre arts lecturers. 20 copies of the questionnaire were distributed to professional dance practitioners at a dance seminar in Lagos. Also, to allow broader participation, 10 copies of the questionnaire were

administered on professional theatre practitioners at the National Theatre, Lagos. This pilot study was conducted on a sample of 100 Nigerian theatre artistes in theatre practice and those undergoing theatre studies.

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Participants

Variable	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
<i>Gender</i>		
Male	40	62.5
Female	23	35.9
Missing	1	1.6
Total	64	100
<i>Age</i>		
16-25	20	31.3
26-35	21	32.8
36 above	20	31.3
Missing	3	4.7
Total	64	100
<i>Education</i>		
Undergraduate	13	20.3
BA	26	40.6
MA	10	15.6
PHD	8	12.5
Missing	7	10.9
Total	64	100
<i>Occupation</i>		
Private Sector	11	17.2
Public Theatre	14	21.9
Lecturing/Teaching	17	26.6
Student	13	20.3
Missing	9	14.1
Total	64	100
<i>Marital Status</i>		
Single	32	50
Married	28	43.8
Divorced	1	1.6
Missing	3	4.7
Total	64	100
<i>Religion</i>		

Christianity	52	81.3
Islam	4	6.3
Others	1	1.6
Missing	7	10.7
Total	64	100

Presentation of Results

The results presented in this section were based on the total number of 64 participants sampled for the pilot study of Thespian ideation in Nigeria. The results are presented below:

Analysis of Table 1

The result in Table 1 is based on the 64 copies of questionnaire duly completed and returned out of the total 100 distributed. This represents 64% response rate; while 36% were either not returned or incomplete. Out of this number, 40 (62.5%) were males, 23 (35.9%) were females, while 1 (1.6%) did not indicate their gender. Participants' age showed that 20 (31.3%) were in the age range from 16-25 years, 32.8% (21) were within 26-35 years, 20 (31.3%) were within the age of 36 years and above; while 3 (4.7%) did not mention their ages. Educational qualification of participants revealed that 13 (20.3%) were undergraduates, 26 (40.6%) had first degree, 10 (15.6%) had master's degree; only 8 (12.5%) had PhD, while 7 (10.9%) did not indicate their levels of education. The result further indicated that 11 (17.2%) were private sector theatre practitioners, 14 (21.9%) were public sector theatre practitioners, 17 (26.6%) were lecturers/teachers, 13 (20.3%) were students and 9 (14.1%) were silent on their occupation. On the marital status of participants, the indication is that, 32 (50%) were singles, 28 (43.8%) were married, 1 (1.6%) was divorced, and 3 (4.7%) did not mention their marital status. Religious affiliation showed that more than 80% of the participants were Christians (52-81.3%); while Muslims were made up of only 6.3% and 1% indicated as other religion while 10.7% were silent on this.

Table 2: Responses on the Thespian Ideation in Nigerian Theatre

Reponses	Frequency(n)	Percent (%)
I have received lectures in drama		
Yes	55	85.9
No	9	14.1
Total	64	100
I have received lectures in dance		
Yes	63	98.4
No	1	1.6
Total	64	100
I have received lectures about Thespians		

Yes	52	81.3
No	11	17.2
Missing	1	1.6
Total	64	100
I have received lectures about Terpsichore		
Yes	9	14.1
No	51	79.7
Missing	4	6.3
Total	64	100
I prefer an acting class to a dance class		
Yes	28	43.8
No	36	56.3
Total	64	100
I prefer a dance class to an acting class		
Yes	34	53.1
No	29	45.3
Missing	1	1.6
Total	64	100
I know the theories of drama and acting		
Yes	51	79.7
No	12	18.8
Missing	1	1.6
Total	64	100
I know the theories of dance and dancing		
Yes	43	67.2
No	21	32.8
Total	64	100
I prefer to be known as a Thespian		
Yes	43	67.2
No	20	31.3
Missing	1	1.6
Total	64	100
I prefer to be known as a Terpsichorean		
Yes	11	17.2
No	46	71.9
Missing	7	10.9

Total	64	100
There is a better employment opportunity as an actor		
Yes	47	73.4
No	12	18.8
Missing	5	7.8
Total	64	100
There is a better employment opportunity as a dancer		
Yes	36	56.3
No	27	42.2
Missing	1	1.6
Total	64	100

Analysis of Table 2

Table 2 presents the responses of participants on the Thespian theatre ideation. The result reveals that the greater percentage (85.9%) representing 55 respondents said they had received lectures in drama; while only 9 (14.1%) said they had not. Also, 98.4% said that they had received lectures in dance; while only 1.6% said, No. Out of the total sample, 52 respondents representing 81.3% reported that they had received lectures about Thespis; while 17.2% representing 11 respondents said they had not and only one respondent did not respond to that statement. On the other hand, a smaller percentage of participants (14.1%) reported that they had received lectures about Terpsichore; while greater number (79.7%) said they had not received such lectures; and 6.3% did not respond. Also, 43.8% of the respondents reported that they preferred an acting class to a dance class while 56.3% said, No, to that statement. However, 53.1% respondents said they preferred a dance class to an acting class, while 45.3% said they do not and 1.6% (1) respondent did not respond. Further, the majority of the respondents (79.7%) said they know the theories of drama and acting, only 12 respondents (18.8%) said they do not know such theories; and only 1.6% (1) was silent. On the knowledge of dance and dancing theories, 43 (67.2%) respondents said, Yes; while 21(32.8%) said no. Also, 43 (67.2%) preferred to be known as a Thespian, 20 (31.3%) respondents do not want to be known as, Thespian. However, only 1.6% (1) of the respondents did not respond. On the other hand, only 11 (17.2%) preferred to be known as, Terpsichorean; 46 (71.9%) do not want to be identified as such and only 7 (10.9%) respondents were silent on this statement.

Finally, 47 (73.4%) respondents believed that there is a better employment opportunity for actors; but 12 (18.8%) said there is no such employment opportunity for actors while 5 (7.8%) did not respond. Also, 36 (56.3%) respondents believed that there is a better employment opportunity for dancers while 27 (42.2%) reported that there is no such employment opportunity with only 1 (1.6%) did not respond to the statement.

Discussion of Findings

For this pilot study a survey instrument based on nineteen items was developed. Seven variables were contained in the questionnaire. The first variable that had to do with the

name of the respondent was optional. The other items were made up of six distinct components namely, lectures in dance and drama, lectures about Thespian and Terpsichore, preference between drama and dance classes, knowledge of the theories of drama and dance, choice of professional titling and employment opportunities for actors and dancers.

Of the 100 copies of questionnaire administered only 64 were completed and returned. Using the sample of 64 theatre graduates and undergraduates, this pilot study confirms that Thespian ideation constitutes impedimenta to the economic survival through dance practice in Nigerian theatre as confirmed from the findings using the NTIS. There are two dimensions in contemporary theatre practice in Nigeria namely, the instructional dimension and the praxis dimension. The instructional dimension is indicated and can be measured by lectures in dance and drama, lectures about Thespian and Terpsichore, preference between drama and dance classes, knowledge of the theories of drama and dance while the praxis dimension is indicated and can be measured by choice of professional nomenclature and employment opportunities for actors and dancers.

Under the instructional dimension, 85.9% received lectures on drama, while 14.1% did not and 98.4% received instruction in dance while 1.6% did not, showing that both subjects are almost at par in terms of lectures received and with negligible percentages of participants who did not. While 81.3% received lectures about Thespian, 17.2% did not. On the other hand, 14.1% received lectures about Terpsichore, while 79.7% did not. This demonstrates a bias in instructional data. Regarding preference for acting and dance classes, 43.8% and 53.1% preferred acting and dance classes respectively whereas 56.3% and 45.3% respectively did not prefer acting and dance classes. Here, there is a greater preference for dance classes than acting classes by both graduates and undergraduates, but the reason for such preference is at the moment blur. In terms of the knowledge of the theories of drama and acting, 79.7% accented to knowing them while 18.8% respondents did not know them whereas on the knowledge of the theories of dance and dancing only 67.7% respondents accented to knowing them; while 32.8% had no knowledge. The indication here is that more theatre practitioners and students have a better grasp of the theories of drama and acting than the theories of dance and dancing.

In considering the praxis dimension, 67.2% prefer to be known as Thespian and 17.2% as Terpsichorean while 31.3% and 71.9% respectively do not prefer either of the nomenclatures. The drift towards Thespian nomenclature indicates the preference of acting to dancing in Nigerian theatre practice. 73.4% of the respondents affirmed that there is a better employment opportunity for the actor while only 56.3% affirmed that there is a better employment opportunity for a dancer. 18.8% and 42.2% respectively are not in agreement that there are better employment opportunities for the actor or the dancer.

This NTIS as conceptualised for use in this pilot study, had undergone face/expert validation, but there is still room for further reliability and validity tests so as to standardise it for international use. Despite the NTIS not being standardised, the findings from this research show that there is significant emphasis on drama and acting

in respect of instructions and practice in Nigerian universities and less of such when it comes to dance. Such preponderance over the years tends to subtly legislate preference for drama and acting and beatify the term Thespian. This pilot data show clearly a marginal knowledge of Terpsichore by only 9 out of 64 respondents. This insignificance reflects the content of theatre arts curriculum as lacking in the theory of dance that touches on its origin even in Greek history, from which Thespis derives significance. Is this philosophical or historical flaw? Is theatre arts curriculum basically derived from Aristotelian schematisations without recognition of other aspects of the theatre? These questions are beyond this paper and the NTIS so developed, but the point is made that Thespian ideation impedes economic survival through dance and therefore there exists an internal and self-imposed economic recession within the theatre in Nigeria.

Recommendations

This paper has argued that Thespian ideation in Nigerian Theatre is part of the institutionalised condescending attitude towards dance which constitutes impedimenta to economic survival through dance. The Nigerian dance practitioner's employability will depend a great deal on capacity informed by a sound knowledge of the history, philosophies, theories, forms, styles, techniques, criticisms and the dynamics that have shaped dance practices in societies. It is, therefore, recommended that:

- The dominance of the canons of literary drama and instructions must be such that dance is not presented as a function of drama, an independent intellectual creative discipline.
- A goal-oriented, holistic and responsive curriculum, sensitive to the developmental needs of the Nigerian society and theatre is recommended against the baseless Thespian fixation.
- An urgent review of the curriculums of basic education and teacher training institutions in Nigeria is also strongly recommended to include dance and train the personnel to teach the subject.
- Although Thespis is recognised as the first actor in the world within the contexts of Greek and modern drama, the notion, mis-education and delusion that all theatre practitioners are Thespians must be vehemently resisted and debunked for the obvious reason that not every theatre practitioner is an actor.
- Finally, the newly developed NTIS questionnaire has not been standardised. It is essentially exploratory. Aware that this pilot study is the first of its kind in developing a Thespian ideation questionnaire in Nigeria, it is recommended that it should be adopted and further standardised by those with interest in measuring the status of dance instruction and practice in Nigeria and elsewhere against the notion of Thespian ideation to redeem the populace from ignorance.

Conclusion

As surmised in this paper, the foetal stirring of what is theatre in contemporary Nigeria was the emergence of literary drama as a colonial consequence. External influences, the institutionalisation of Western drama prototype and the participation of the Nigerian

intelligentsia advanced the course of literary drama and projected the Thespian model against the grain of theatre training and practice in both international and domestic settings. The effort here has been to interrogate the nomenclature of Thespian for the confusion, limitations and delusory claim to represent the totality of the arts of the theatre including dance whose potentials it has limited.

To argue the condescending attitude towards dance due the preponderance of the Thespian fixation in Nigeria, a pilot study with a questionnaire, namely, Nigerian Thespian Ideation Scale (NTIS) was developed and used. The results indicate discrimination in favour of drama and the Thespis while dance and Terpsichore (the Greek muse of dance and song) are little known by students, practitioners and scholars of the theatre in Nigeria. In the final analysis, a review of the curriculum from primary to tertiary levels of education is recommended as the only solution to guarantee balance needs, goals and instructions to include dance in order to save its practitioners the agony of intellectual and psychological road blocks posed by Thespian ideation. Indeed, Thespian ideation is the burden of a skewed theatre pedagogy which must be reversed by a drastic and complete curriculum review in order for the dance as a distinguishable and isolatable philosophical construct in society, to unleash its potentials for the economic survival of its practitioners even in an ailing economy.

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